

Brecknock
U.S. Route 13
Camden
Kent County
Delaware

HABS No. DE-178

HABS
DEL,
1- CAM,
3-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

APPENDIX
FOLLOWS

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

BRECKNOCK

44BS
DEL,
1-CAM,
3-
DE-178

Location: Approximately .2 miles west of U.S. Route 13 at its north junction with Route 13A, Camden, Kent County, Delaware.
Latitude: 39° 07' 26" Longitude: 75° 32' 10".

Present Owner/
Occupant: Elizabeth Howell (Mrs. Henry) Goggin, P.O. Box 711, Camden, DE 19934.

Present Use: Residence

Significance: Brecknock, owned by the same family since 1766, was built in four sections, with the oldest section probably dating from the seventeenth century.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: ca. 1683-84.
2. Architect: Not known.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The following chain of title traces only that part of the original 600-acre Brecknock tract which contains the house.

1680	17 November. Grant from Court of St. Jones (Kent) County to Alexander Humphry for 600 acres of vacant land. He was to seat there and improve the land within one year of the survey. (Kent County Deed Book A1, p. 4).
1683	24 May. Warrant from court for survey of the 600 acres of land previously granted to Alexander Humphrey. (K. C. Warrant book A, p. 94).
1683-84	8 First Month. Survey of Alexander Humphrey's 600 acres tract "called and known by the name of Brecknock." (K. C. Warrants and surveys, H8, #178; K. C. Survey Book A, p. 150).
1684	4 Tenth Month. Alexander Humphreys and Elizabeth, his wife, sold the entire Brecknock Tract to Richard Mitchell for "a valuable consideration." (K. C. Deed Book B1, 1st, p. 63).

- 1684 (sic) 6 January. Richard Mitchell and Mary, his wife, to Obadiah Judkin. A moiety, or 300 acres, of Brecknock, specifically "the messuage and plantation James Wells deceased dwelled upon" and the land adjoining it, were sold for "a valuable consideration." (K. C. Deed Book B1, 1st, pp. 81-82).
- 1685 28 March. Obadiah Judkins and Jane, his wife, to Daniel Toaes. The half part of 300 acres of Brecknock "late in the tenure of James Wells deceased" was sold for "one negro servant man and one man servant." K. C. Deed Book B1, 1st, pp. 67-68). On the same day Toaes purchased the remaining 300 acres of Brecknock from Richard Mitchell and Mary, his wife, for 4000 pounds of tobacco in casks. (K. C. Deed Book B1, 1st, p. 68).
- 1724 9 July. John Hudson, administrator of estate of Daniel Toes, to Andrew Caldwell. At the February 1723 term of the Court of Common Pleas, Robert Grundy recovered a debt of £150 and court costs from Hudson as administrator for debts owed to him by Toes. The only estate left by Toes was three tracts of land, including Brecknock; the court ordered them sold to pay the debts and costs. Caldwell paid £150.10 for the three tracts. (K.C. Deed H1, pp. 123-125).
- 1740 18 October. Andrew Caldwell to John Hill. Sale of 45 acres of the Brecknock Tract for £10. (K. C. Deed Book M1, pp. 89-90).
- 1746 12 February. John Hill to John Clayton, Jr. Sale of 45 acres of the Brecknock Tract and also two acres of a tract called Smyrna, which is on the north side of Isaac's Branch "near opposit" & to the present dwelling house of John Hill (which was on the Brecknock Tract). The price was £45. (K. C. Deed Book N1, p. 134).
- 1750 12 May. John Clayton to James Clayton. Sale of "Clayton's New Mill" and two tracts of land: 45 acres of Brecknock on which the mill is located and 2 acres opposite in the larger Smyrna tract for £150. The two acres were laid off to John Hill by an act of Assembly for the use and convenience of building a grist mill. (K. C. Deed Book O1, p. 48).

- 1761 31 January. James Clayton and Grace, his wife, to Thomas Hanson and Joshua Gregg. Three tracts of land are sold: The two lots which Clayton purchased from his brother in 1750 and a 29-acre 48 square perch section of Brecknock which he had purchased in 1752 from John Bowers; Bowers had purchased it from Andrew Caldwell in 1734. (K. C. Deed Books 01, p. 127). The cost of this land was \$500. (K. C. Deed Book Q1, p. 33).
- 1766 12 June. Joshua Gregg to Thomas Hanson. Gregg sold his moiety or equal half part of the land they purchased jointly from James Clayton for £665. (K. C. Deed Book R1, pp. 114-115).
- 1783 3 June. Will of Thomas Hanson proved. One-third of his estate was to be for the use of his wife Mary during her natural life and the other two-thirds were for his daughter Susanne Howell, who was to enjoy the whole estate after her mother's death. He entailed his estate, so that his "mansion plantation mill & c." ~~were to be used by his son-in-law Samuel Howell~~ (the husband of Susan) during the minority of his grandchildren. The grandchildren were to enjoy the use of his lands equally during their natural lives, and then it would return to his estate, and would be divided equally among his great-grand-children after the death of all his grandchildren. (K. C. Will Book M1, pp. 13-14).
- 1812 Action of petition entered in the Court of Common Pleas; Samuel Newbold and Abigail, his wife, (late Abigail Howell, one of the grandchildren of Thomas Hanson) vs. Mary Howell and Thomas Hanson Howell (other grandchildren of Thomas Hanson). The land was partitioned among the grandchildren but remained in fee tail rather than in fee simple. (K. C. Deed Book K3, pp. 221-212).
- 1836 15 July. Thomas Hanson Howell to Daniel Atwell. Sale of his portion of his grandfather's land in fee simple, as permitted in such cases by an act of the Assembly, for \$4000. This is section g of the division, but the plat has not been located. It includes 219 acres 35 square perches and a mill, dwelling house, other houses, mill stream, and mill pond. (K. C. Deed Book K3, pp. 211-212).

- 1836 15 July. Daniel Atwell resold to Thomas Hanson Howell for \$4000 the same property conveyed to him by Howell in a deed bearing the same date as this one. (K. C. Deed Book K3, pp. 212-214).
- 1874 23 June. Will of Thomas Hanson Howell proved. His mill, pond, farm near Camden, house and 20 acres near the Camp Ground (land owned by the Camden Camp Meeting Association) were bequeathed to his wife, Nancy. It was to be equally divided among his sons, Hanson, Emerson, and Jonathan, after his wife's death; they were not to have the property until after the death of his wife. (K. C. Will Book U1, pp. 235-236).
- 1907 16 December. Samuel E. Howell and Lilla, his wife, to Thomas H. Howell, Jr. The grantors sold their interest in the land in North Murderkill Hundred which Thomas H. Howell, Sr., devised to his widow for life with remainder to his sons for life for \$2000. (K. C. Deed Book N9, pp. 305-306).
- 1908 18 April. Nancy E. Howell to Thomas H. Howell, Jr. She sold her life interest in the land in North Murderkill Hundred formerly owned by her husband for \$1. (K. C. Deed Book N9, pp. 456-457).
- 1908 11 July. Thomas H. Howell, trustee for Jonathan J. Howell, a lunatic, to Thomas H. Howell. On 18 June 1908 T. H. Howell petitioned the Chancellor of Delaware for permission to sell J. J. Howell's interest in the land in North Murderkill Hundred that was part of his father's estate. Permission for the sale was granted and on 7 July the land was sold to T. H. Howell, who had been given permission to bid for it, for \$1700. The deed was made after a return of the proceedings in the matter to the Chancellor. (K.C. Deed Book P9, pp. 240-243).
- 1942 29 July. Will of Thomas Hanson Howell proved. After his debts were paid, his entire estate was bequeathed to Kathryn M. Howell, his wife. (K. C. Will Book A3, p. 278).
- 1949 31 December. Kathryn M. Howell to Elizabeth Howell Goggin. Two tracts of land sold for \$1. One tract was "lately known as the Howell Mill Property" (Brecknock) which contained 25 acres of upland and improved land and a mill pond of unspecified acreage. (K. C. Deed Book T18, pp. 481-483).

4. Original plans and construction:

The oldest section of the house, ca. 1683-1684, was built crudely and suggests haste. The common-bond brick walls are not plumb and the knotty oak beams in the structural supports needed reinforcement several years ago. This one-room shed-roofed section has a loft which was probably reached by a ladder. The fireplace with an oven at the west end originally had a hearth and chimney, but they have been removed and replaced by a cupboard. There are indications of another smaller oven that was later removed to convert the space to other uses. The house seems to have had a dirt floor.

5. Alterations and additions:

Several alterations were made to this section in the eighteenth century. An enclosed stairway with beaded paneling and paneled doors gave access to the loft. A floor was laid on log foundations, under which is 18" of fill. The fireplace hearth was raised to the new floor level. The walls, including the fireplace wall, were plastered. An entrance into a potato cellar (now the cellar entrance to the house) was made; the cellar floor was subsequently replaced by a concrete one and the space filled in made a crawl space, and a new potato cellar later added in front of this one (perhaps at the time of the second addition).

At the time of the first addition, the roof on the original house was raised 5 feet. The loft was then partitioned into two rooms. The ceiling of the large room was plastered. A closet was constructed next to the fireplace, over the original entrance to the loft. Over the plaster ceilinged room is another loft with access by a ladder; there is no evidence of a floor. The window in one of the upper rooms was blocked up by a later addition.

A common-bond brick addition, also shed-roofed, was constructed at right angles to the south side of the original house; this was probably done in the 1740s. There is an entrance door between the old and new sections and there is an outside door which became the main entrance. This addition has a cellar with an entrance south of the new main door. At an early time its ceiling was lathed with oak nailed to the underside of the floor by soft, big-headed nails. The first-floor room of this addition was partitioned by boards covered with lath and plaster shortly after the addition was constructed; the molding extends across it. The small room may have contained a stairway to the second floor; otherwise there was no access to it from the original

house until the twentieth century. The corner cupboard originally had paneled doors. The chair rail has been re-installed on the markings left from its removal. The outside door between the fireplace and cupboard on the end wall has been closed up. The original floor in the two upstairs rooms has been covered.

The second addition, constructed of frame, probably dates to the mid-eighteenth century. Two steps higher than the first addition, it is two-and-a-half stories with a cellar connecting with the cellar of the first addition but above its level. The first floor has a stair hall and a large room. The woodwork around the windows is of a later period, perhaps 1837-1838 when extensive repairs were made. The doorway in the hall was not originally framed for a door; the existing door is of a date later than the addition and is similar in design to the replacement of the entry door in the first addition. There are two bedrooms on the second floor, with a small hall at the top of the staircase which gives access to both rooms through paneled doors. The connection between the first and second additions is at one side. Entrance to the attic was gained by steep, narrow steps in the upper hall; they were removed in 1920. In order to build this addition the roof of the first addition was raised. The peak of the high, steep roof is on the frame addition and forms a gable roof.

The third addition, which completed the front of the house, was constructed in the 1880s or 1890s as a four-room apartment for the mill wagon driver. It is frame, with two rooms on each floor and an attic. At some time after 1912 this addition became part of the main house. The room that adjoins the end of the original house has been converted into a kitchen. The door into the original house is in the position of the outside door.

A screened porch with a shed roof is at the west corner of the house. There is an entrance from it into the living room. Aluminum storm sashes have been added to the single-hung windows on the two main floors. The roofs have been covered with asphalt shingles. The steps leading to the cellar are now concrete blocks; originally they were brick. The kitchen floor has been covered with linoleum. Modern heating, plumbing facilities, and utilities have been added to the house.

5. Historical Events and Personages:

Also known as "Howell's Mill Seat" and "Clayton's New Mill," Brecknock, named after a Welsh shire, was important as a milling site for approximately two centuries. John Hill, a millwright, obtained land necessary for building a mill in 1740. In 1746 it was sold to John Clayton, a miller who already owned a mill.

The mill referred to as "Clayton's New Mill" was sold to his brother in 1750. It is possible that James Clayton built the first frame addition to the house to accommodate his growing family. Thomas Hanson and Joshua Gregg purchased the property in 1760; the property has remained in the family since Hanson purchased Gregg's share in 1766. Thomas Hanson served as a justice of the peace between 1771 and 1774. The complicated entail of his estate is uncommon in Delaware, particularly in the 1780s. After 1783 the mill was known as Howell's Mill; it was the second grist mill on Isaac's Branch of the St. Jones River. It ceased operation in 1928, and in 1944 was torn down by the present owner.

Prepared by: Sally Schwartz
Architectural Historian
Division of Historical and
Cultural Affairs
1975

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This is an unusual plan of three additions to the original one-room house, dating from the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries.
2. Condition of Fabric: Good

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall Dimensions: The original brick house is approximately 30'x20', one-and-a-half stories. A brick wing on the south corner is approximately 30'x20', two-stories. A clapboard addition southeast of that wing is approximately 30'x20', two-and-a-half stories. The third addition, northeast of the second addition and southeast of the original section, is approximately 20'x22', two stories.
2. Foundations: Brick.
3. Walls: The original section and first addition are brick, white-washed, common bond, with some glazed headers. On the west side of the original brick structure is a projecting one-brick belt course. The second and third additions are clapboard, painted green.

4. Structural system, framing: The first two sections are brick load-bearing walls with timber joists and rafters. The later additions are wood frame construction.
5. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc.: There is a wooden stoop at the center entrance on the southeast facade, with two steps and a bench on each side. The screened porch with shed roof on the west corner of the house has a wood floor and wood ceiling. There is a metal-covered concrete block bulkhead on the southwest side of the house near the center.
6. Chimneys: There are four brick chimneys: one in the center of the northwest brick wall that has had the oven chimney removed above the roof; one in the center of the northeast gable end, which does not extend to the ground; one in the south corner; and one on the southwest facade at the end of the brick wall.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance near the center of the southeast facade has a simple wood surround, a paneled door with a beveled glass upper panel and a four-light transom window. The door from the stair hall leading to the screened porch is a paneled door with a hinged glass panel upper section. There is a heavy wood surround and deep jamb with a large wood sill. The entrance from the screened porch to the living room is similar but without a hinged glass panel. The exterior door from the living room on the northeast has a wood surround and paneled door, with a screen door. There is a paneled storm door on the main entrance with a nine-light upper panel.
 - b. Windows and shutters: The windows vary. Generally, there are six-over-six-light single-hung sash on the second floor and nine-over-six-light single-hung sash on the first floor. There is one fifteen-over-fifteen-light single-hung sash on the east end of the northeast facade, first floor. Paneled shutters on the first-floor and louvered shutters on the second floor are on the southeast facade.
8. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: There are steep shed roofs on the two brick sections and a gable roof on the clapboard additions, all covered with white asphalt shingles.
 - b. Cornice, eaves: There is an open eave on the brick sections and boxed eaves on the clapboard additions.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Basement: There is a cellar with brick and dirt floor that has the coal bins and furnace. The cellar under the original brick structure has been partially filled in and made into a crawl space with a concrete floor.
- b. First floor: Generally, the first floor of each addition is divided into two rooms, while the original section is one room. The main entrance on the southeast facade (second addition) leads into a stairhall, with the parlor on the southwest. The parlor has a fireplace in the south corner and a corner cupboard in the west corner. Behind the stair hall is the rear hall, with the study southwest of it (first addition). The study has a fireplace in the south corner and a corner cupboard in the west corner. Northeast of the stairhall is the dining room and northwest of that, the kitchen (third addition). There is a small toilet and pantry on the southwest wall of the kitchen. Northwest of the kitchen is the living room (original portion). On the northwest wall is a large fireplace with two cupboards to the right side, one formerly a bake oven. To the left of the fireplace, stairs to the second floor have been removed.
- c. Second floor: The main stairway leads to a small center hall with a bathroom and closet in the rear. There are bedrooms in the west, south, and east corners. The second floor of the original section is not accessible from the additions. Instead, an enclosed stairway in the living room leads to the two rooms above. There is a small corner cupboard in the stairway where it winds and at the landing is an opening to the main house, now closed up, that was used to call the servants. On the northwest wall of this section there is a blocked-up fireplace and a closet on the left, which is where the stairs used to come up.
- c. Attic: The attic is unfinished and used for storage. It is reached by a stairway in the east bedroom.

2. Stairway: The main stairway is a quarter-turn with landing, open-well, closed-string. The handrail is molded on the outside face only and flat on the stair side, and there are turned balusters. There is wood paneling enclosing the string on the first floor.

The stairways to the attic are quarter-turn with winders, enclosed. Stairway to the cellar has concrete block steps, originally brick.

3. Flooring: There are wide plank floors in most rooms and narrow boarding in some. Linoleum covers the kitchen floor. The wide plank floor is painted in the bathroom.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Walls and ceilings are plaster, wallpapered in some rooms. A chair rail is in the west bedroom and the south bedroom on the second floor, and in the parlor, center hall and study on the first floor. The ceiling in the living room has exposed wood beams and plaster between. There is a wood cornice in the south and west bedrooms on the second floor, and in the parlor and study on the first floor.
5. Doorways and doors: Paneled doors with porcelain knobs and simple wood surrounds are on the second floor. Heavy wood surrounds are on paneled doors on the first floor. There is a vertical plank door between kitchen and living room and at the doorways to cellar and attic, and on the second-floor attic above the living room.
6. Special decorative features, trim and cabinet work: The fireplace in the parlor is plaster with a crossetted wood surround. The wall is paneled with a cupboard to one side with "H" hinges. The hearth is made of square bricks with a wood band at the floor. The corner cupboard in the parlor is open at top, with butterfly shelves and plate grooves. The back of the cupboard is rounded with vertical boarding and a domed top, with remnants of original paint. The chairrail steps up to the cupboard bottom open shelf. A large arched surround has a wood keystone.

The fireplace in the study is plastered, with a crossetted wood surround with plinth blocks, wooden mantel and a wooden panel above the mantel with crossettes top and bottom. The corner cupboard in the study has two doors on the lower section and formerly two doors on the upper section, now open. A wood surround on the cupboard has crossettes at the top and plinth blocks at the base. Crossettes are on the window trim in the study.

The fireplace in the living room has a wide brick hearth across the width of the room. There is a lintel over the cooking fireplace and a round arch over the bake oven, which is now a cupboard. There is an iron crane in the cooking fireplace.

The fireplace in the south bedroom, second floor, has a plastered stepped surround with wood paneling on the wall around it. There is a shallow raised brick hearth with square bricks. A cupboard on the right side of the fireplace has removable shelves designed to be access to the flue of the fireplace. Cupboard has original "H" hinges.

Wood paneling is around the fireplace with a cupboard on the left side in the west corner bedroom, second floor.

7. Hardware: The door to the dining room from the center hall has an iron handle latch. There is a wood sliding latch on the door to the living room from the kitchen. The door in the attic over the original house and the cupboard door in the stairway have leather hinges and wood bolt latches. The door to the small room has "H" hinges and a wood bolt.
8. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Heating: The house is heated by steam heat from a coal furnace, with radiators in principle rooms.
 - b. Plumbing: There is a porcelain tub with rolled rim and claw feet in the bathroom. Other plumbing fixtures are modern.
 - c. Lighting: No notable lighting fixtures.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The house faces southeast, about 1/4 mile from U.S. 13, on the northwest side. A gravel driveway leads up to the house and in front of it to the outbuildings and tenant house. Cultivated land surrounds the site with wooded areas to the northeast and northwest about 300 yards away.
2. Landscape: There are several large trees around the house. A rose garden is located southwest of the house.
3. Outbuildings: Numerous outbuildings are southwest of the house. To the northeast in front of the house is a tenant house. About 300 yards north-northwest of the house is ruins of a colonial mill. Partial brick walls and concrete foundation are standing. There is a constructed mill-race for the mill. A shed is between the mill and tenant house, having been moved there.

Prepared by: John P. White
Project Supervisor
Historic American Buildings
Survey
August 1975

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Primary and Unpublished Sources:

Deed Books: Office of the Recorder of Deeds,
Kent County Court House, Dover, Delaware;
Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs,
Hall of Records, Dover, Delaware.

Will Books: Office of the Register of Wills,
Kent County Court House, Dover, Delaware.

B. Secondary Sources

Scharf, J. Thomas. History of Delaware 1609-1888, vol. II. Philadelphia: L. J. Richards & Co., 1888.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey in cooperation with the Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs, State of Delaware, and was financed with funds provided by the State of Delaware. Under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS, the project was completed during the summer of 1975 at the Historic American Buildings Survey Field Office, Dover, Delaware, by John P. White (Assistant Professor, Texas Tech University), Project Supervisor; James Stewart (University of Delaware), Sally Schwartz (Harvard University), Joan M. Norton (Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs), Project Historians; Charles B. Tonetti (Syracuse University), Architect; Student Assistant Architects, Scott Barnard (University of Pennsylvania), Frederick K. Read (University of Notre Dame), and Mark T. Wellen (Texas Tech University). The written data were edited by Alison K. Hoagland, HABS historian, in February, 1983.

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XEROGRAPHIC COPIES OF COLOR TRANSPARENCIES

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C., 20013